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ABSTRACT

Society must take steps to provide desirable employment for disadvantaged minority youth. Since vocational education is the largest of the public-supported training programs, it must be in the vanguard to ensure development of job and career opportunities for all citizens who want to work, especially racial and ethnic minorities, handicapped persons, and women. The following 13 actions are recommended to accomplish this: (1) create public service jobs that can lead to career advancement; (2) revise protective legislation; (3) encourage large employers to consider the effects of their decisions to hire minority groups and to continue employment opportunities for them by such actions as providing transportation, and so forth; (4) encourage and help young women who become pregnant to finish high school; (5) help employers provide ways for workers to move from low-paid to higher-paid jobs either through job redesign or worker retraining; (6) upgrade vocational education and encourage minority youth to enter the more desirable programs; (7) expand work/study programs; (8) redouble efforts to end employment discrimination; (9) review licensing requirements and remove obstacles to minority groups; (10) assure jobs for young persons who complete training programs in the private or public sector; (11) accept more minority group members in the armed forces; (12) provide more rehabilitation and training for law offenders before they are released; and (13) broaden education and work opportunities and create more flexibility in entering and leaving school. (KC)

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SOME SOLUTIONS TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROBLEMS

OF MINORITY, DISADVANTAGED AND HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

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The absence of desirable employment and career opportunities, public and private, for large numbers of disadvantaged minority youth is a failure that our society must correct without delay. There is urgent need for constructive action because of high unemployment and the widening gap between the expectation of minority youth for full participation in American society and in large measure due to the realities of continued exclusion, deprivation, and discrimination. Over the long term the American people must address themselves with even greater seriousness to those defects in our institutions that have created and continued to enlarge the problem. An analysis of these problems and some suggested solutions/alternatives for their remedy are addressed in this position. These immediate and priority actions are recommended:

A. For all young people who want to work and are unable to secure employment in the private sector, the establishment of public service jobs.

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B. The expansion of services, including child care voluntary family planning, and of part-time employment opportunities for all young women, particularly racial and ethnic minorities who are currently out of school and out of work.

C. Adequate funding for anti-discrimination efforts at federal, state, and local governments to speed the removal of arbitrary racial, ethnic, and sex barriers.

These actions are urgently required, not only on ground of justice, access and equity to the minority modalities, but also to insure that our society does not become the target of those who see no alternative to revolution and violence to secure their rights.

Since vocational education is the largest of the public supported training programs, it must be in the vanguard to insure development of job and career opportunities for all citizens who want to work, primarily racial and ethnic minorities, the handicapped, and women.

Specifically, the following 13 actions are recommended.

1. On the basis of the nation's current experience, it is concluded that the establishment and maintenance of a continuing high level of employment is an

essential precondition fo sustained progress in improving the job and career opportunities of all youths, particularly minority youths. But even if the country were willing to tolerate higher levels of unemployment and deflation as the cost of a continuing high level of unemployment, such a policy still would not generate an adequate number of jobs for teenage and young adult workers, particularly those who belong to minority groups. Accordingly, it is recommended that Congress enact legislation creating a substantial number of productive, "non-make" work public service jobs that, through an educational and training component, that can lead to career advancement.

2. The states and the federal government passed many statutes in the early 1900's limiting the conditions under which young people and women were permitted to work, the length of the working day and week, and the equipment they were permitted to handle. With the passage of time, changes in technology, and altered conditions of the work place, some of this protective legislation has come to impede the employment of young people. It is recommended that the Department of Labor initiate a comprehensive review of federal and state legislation and regulations and administrative interpretations of them as they affect employment of youth.

3. Large employers, public as well as private, must consider, more than they have in the past, the effect of vocational decisions on employment opportunities for minority group workers. The decision to move from the central city to a suburb or to another country for that matter may have the same effect as hanging out a sign "No Minorities Wanted"(or "No Americans Wanted" regardless of race, ethnicity, sex or religious background)if minorities have no ready access to the location. Where interuban transport is in place, it is essential that the responsible agencies establish schedules to facilitate travel by city residents to suburbs; and, where it is lacking, explore the feasibility of establishing special bus routes. The federal, state and local governments, with the assistance of private sector enterprises, must facilitate the building of more low income and middle income housing inside and outside the central cities and insure that especially minorities but all Americans have access to it.

4. Many young women, especially minority women, are particularly vicitmized because, in addition to the handicap of race, ethnicity, and low income, they face sex discrimination in terms of the jobs available, wages paid, and opportunities for advancement. Since many young minority group women leave high school

because of pregnancy, it is recommended that the educational authorities make special efforts to enable these young women to continue their studies during pregnancy and facilitate their return to school after the birth of their children.

5. Because there are a large number of jobs that provide limited opportunities for advancement in the American economy, it is recommended that all employers private, nonprofit, and governmental, on their own, or in association with trade unions and educational and training institutions, seek to improve the productivity of low paying jobs through capital investment, job redesign, and improved management, so that wage rates and earnings can be reaised; build career ladders to facilitate the movement of workers from low paying to better jobs; provide educational and training opportunities so that poorly paid workers can, be up-dating their skills, gain access to better jobs in their present or related occupation.

6. The quality of vocational educational and technical training available to high school students and dropouts should be improved through a strengthened system of vocational training based upon acquiring basic knowledge primarily but no exclusively, in mathematics and sciences through providing those who qualify, access

to selected vocational courses in community colleges, and preparatory schools and through permitting, indeed encouraging, minority group youth to enter the more desirable programs.

7. Approximately 40 percent of young people in low income areas of our cities drop out of junior or senior high school without earning a diploma, and many others obtain a diploma that attests more to their "attendance" than to the skill and competence they have acquired. One important reform would be for employers, labor unions, and the educational authorities to cooperate and bring about a substantial expansion of work/study, cooperative, and related programs.

8. Young minority group people have seen their parents denied jobs, promotion, stability in employment, and access to fringe benefits for no other reason than the color of their skin, ethnicity or sex. Therefore, a redoubling of efforts to eliminate discrimination in employment is recommended. Federal, state, and local legislative bodies should increase their funding to anti-discrimination agencies so that they are better able to carry out their missions; private and nonprofit employers should devote more time and effort to insuring that their organizations and implement strong equal opportunity employment programs and see to it that

they are carried out and evaluated by middle and first line management.

9. Our society may be termed a "credentialed" economy. More and more of the preferred jobs are open only to persons who have acquired the appropriate degree, diploma, certificate or license. It is recommended that state and local legislative bodies review their licensing structures and proceudres to assure broader representation of public members, including representatives from minority groups and women; removal of arbitrary obstacles to certifications, including high fees for licensing examination; and restraint in establishing licensing requirements for additional occupations, unless careful study indicates a need.

10. Specifically, the federal, state or local governments should link training to a job(s) by providing assurance that a young person who satisfactorily completes a training program and cannot find a position in the private sector because of slack demand will be placed in a public service job where he or she can add to his or her skills while earning a wage.

11. It is recommended that the armed forces, as the single largest employer in the country, continue their efforts to avoid using their prospective personnel stringency

to reject minority groups, who, despite low scores, could perform effectively.

12. It is recommended that more reliance be made on probation for first-term offenders with linkage to training and employment programs. In addition, appropriate training for those who are sentenced to jail or prison and better placement services after they are released are essential.

13. Young people need a varying diet of education, training, work, income, and exploration to develop their potential and to help them to find themselves. There is no simple prescription for how these broadened opportunities can best be provided. But it is recommended the following lines of action be taken: easier ways to leave formal schooling without prejudice and to return to school; more opportunities for young people to enter gainful employment as part of a structured educational and training experience; more governmental and voluntary programs that offer young people opportunities for worthwhile public and community service as part of their educational training and maturational development.

Dramatic changes in the composition of the national work force and implementation of new concepts in career education suggests a significantly greater role for vocational education in the decade ahead. The rates of increased opportunities for employment in the 1980's are projected to take place in the services' sector, in the private and governmental sectors of electronics and computers, the space and genetic industries and the harvesting of the seas to break the back of the food problem and provide vital minerals.